CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 29 July 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mrs. Krasnohorská (Slovakia)

GE.97-63723 (E)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 771st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me first of all, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to extend a warm welcome to our new colleagues, Ambassadors Javier Illanes of Chile and Clive Pearson of New Zealand, who are taking part in our work for the first time. I would also like to assure them of our fullest cooperation and support in their new duties.

I also wish to inform you that, in conformity with the decision we took at the last plenary meeting, on 27 June 1997, immediately following the end of this plenary meeting we shall hold informal open-ended consultations in order to continue consideration of the items outstanding regarding the programme of work of the Conference.

On my list of speakers today I have the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ambassador Sir Michael Weston, and the representative of Ukraine, Ambassador Maimeskul. As you know, Ambassador Sir Michael Weston is leaving this Conference after having represented his Government here for over five years with distinction and a consummate sense of humour. He joined the Conference at a crucial stage when it was finalizing negotiations on the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and most of us recall his personal contribution in the final stages of the negotiations. He also played an outstanding role in the drawing up of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, where he was always able to reconcile the views of his Government and the need to secure a consensus acceptable to all. During his stay in Geneva, Sir Michael Weston also worked extensively outside the context of the activities of the Conference on Disarmament, and his personal contribution to efforts to strengthen the Convention on Biological Weapons was to be seen in particular in the exemplary fashion in which he chaired the last review conference of States parties to the Convention. Accordingly, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I should like to wish him and his family much success and happiness in his new activities. I invite Ambassador Sir Michael Weston to take the floor.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I am sincerely touched by your kind words. As you say, I am taking the floor in a CD plenary for the last time today. Next Monday, I leave Geneva after five and a half years as the United Kingdom's Ambassador to the CD. In that time, I have listened to a good number of valedictory statements from departing colleagues. In these statements, there have been two recurring themes: first, the departing Ambassadors comment that in their time at the CD, they have completed a circuit of the chairs at the conference table, starting and finishing in the same place; secondly, Ambassadors recall their time as CD President. The welcome expansion of the CD's membership has changed all that - at least for me.

With regard to the first theme, however, perhaps now is the time to admit that, philistine that I am, I am no great fan of the austere murals which stare gloomily down on us, the effect accentuated by the strange custom of always having the curtains in the Council Chamber drawn across the windows so that we conduct our business in Stygian gloom. The fact that I have not

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been able to view the murals from every conceivable angle in this Chamber therefore causes me no great heartache. On the second theme, I used to think that the opposite would be true and that, in never having been President of the CD, I had missed out on one of life's great opportunities. However, as the CD's impasse has deepened, the job of CD President has this year become ever more arduous and thankless. Consequently, I am beginning to believe I have had a lucky escape. All the more so when I realize that, but for the CD's expansion, the United Kingdom would currently hold the Presidency and I should be delivering this statement from where you, Madam, are now sitting!

In her valedictory statement in 1992, my predecessor appealed for the use of dogs in chemical and biological weapons defence research programmes to cease. Although I sympathize with Miss Solesby's aim and certainly, sitting in this Chamber, empathize with the wretched beagles used in research on the effect of smoking and passive smoking on human beings, I have no such clear message. Nevertheless my remarks which follow are my personal views, not those of the British Government.

In my five years at the CD, I have come to look on the Conference as something akin to the little girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead: when she is good, she is very, very good; but when she is bad, she is horrid. My first four years here, beginning with the final stages of the CWC negotiations, were good years; 1997 on the other hand has been pretty horrid - so far at least. Last year, we added the CTBT to the impressive list of achievements of the CD and its predecessors. This year, the CD has been deadlocked for months and we have been unable to start any substantive work. All we have to show for our efforts is the appointment of the four special coordinators. We shall clearly have to do better if we expect our governments to continue to pay for us to live in this splendid country.

It seems to me to be important not to forget that the CD is, first and foremost, a negotiating forum. There are other places to talk about disarmament. The purpose of the CD is to produce agreements of substance and worth. We can only do this by negotiating on subjects which are ripe for negotiation. In my view, there are currently two of these: anti-personnel landmines (APLs) and the fissile material cut-off (FMCT). I sincerely hope, therefore, that Ambassador Campbell's appointment as Special Coordinator on APLs will lead rapidly to the establishment of an ad hoc committee to negotiate a treaty. While the United Kingdom is fully committed to the Ottawa Process, complementary work in the CD is clearly necessary to bring in those who will not be with us in Ottawa in December. Meanwhile, I leave the CD with deep regret that we have been unable to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty either. The Shannon report, and the mandate contained therein, was a fragile consensus. But at least it showed that the CD can, by compromise, produce agreement on a common basis for work despite widely differing viewpoints of members. If the CD is ever to get down to proper negotiations again, such compromise will be necessary, on all sides. Nobody will get 100 per cent of what they want. As they say, half a loaf is better than no bread.

The need for reform of the CD's work methods and practices is self-evident. Ahmad Kamal made a good start on this a couple of years ago,

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even if I personally remember him even more fondly for getting me a new diplomatic identity card and, consequently, often imagine I see his face on my card rather than my own. In appointing Ambassador Zahran, whose experience is equally vast, to continue Ambassador Kamal's work as Special Coordinator on improved and effective functioning, the Conference has made an excellent choice. I wish him well in his task. I also welcome the appointment of Ambassador Náray as Special Coordinator for the agenda. I fear that his task is in some ways even more difficult than Ambassador Zahran's. He will have to listen to those who say the agenda needs updating as well as to those who agree that it needs updating but only if it stays the same. Finally, I wish Ambassador Kreid well as Special Coordinator on membership expansion. I sincerely hope that the wishes of those countries who want to join the CD can be satisfied, particularly those who have waited the longest to join the club. Here again, the Special Coordinator has no easy task. I still believe personally that it was a mistake not to admit all who had applied up to the time the 23 were admitted. But I fear that our subsequent experience, and the subsequent growth in the number of applicants, has led me to believe that this approach may no longer be the answer.

I have referred to the CD as a club. Of course there are some who would view the term "club" as pejorative. I have much sympathy with them, even though I come from a country where clubs are still popular and continue to provide a venue for men, and now even women, to get to know each other better. It would be wrong to underestimate the importance of personal relations in our work. Personally, I think that what we really mean when we talk of the CD's "expertise" is that we understand each other and have learned to work together.

A former British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, used to say that he always told ambassadors the truth because he knew they would not believe it. In a few days' time, I will, they tell me, have to retire after 36 years in the diplomatic service. I don't believe it. But alas it is true. It has been a great life. I am not sure that I have achieved much. But it has certainly been fun and it has been an honour and a privilege to end my career in the CD. I would like to thank all those, some of whom have already left and some of whom are absent today, who have made my five years in Geneva such a rewarding time for me - and for my wife, who leaves with me after seven years here, having already spent two years in the CD before I arrived. I would like sincerely to apologize to all those whom I have offended during this time, either by describing what they have said as rubbish or, for example, by suggesting that their countries are wriggling on a hook. Let me assure you that such comments were never malicious nor meant to be taken too seriously. In addition, I should like to thank the secretariat and the conference services staff. I should like to say a special thank-you to the interpreters, those faceless voices, whose task, at times, I must admit, I have mischievously tried to make more difficult but also, I hope, more challenging. Finally, I would like to thank those among the NGOs who have so willingly engaged in vigorous debate with me. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) have already promised to send me a membership application form on my birthday. I am not sure whether this gamekeeper is yet ready to turn poacher. The problem is that I actually believe in nuclear deterrence even in the post-cold-war era and, indeed, I am convinced that, along with

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many others who were in Kuwait in 1991, I owe my life to President Bush, who demonstrated just how deterrence should work. But that is where I came in five years ago.

But rather than end on too sombre a note, may I just suggest to you, to those of you who still do not understand the concept of nuclear deterrence, credible only if never used, that it may help to remember the story of the American who went into a smart shop in St. James's in London to buy a proper, ultra-thin, tightly rolled umbrella - not one of those horrid expanding things most of us carry in our briefcases. He asked the shop assistant how to roll it up after use. He was told he must never unroll it. He asked what then he should do if it rained. The reply was "Then, Sir, you stand on the kerb, raise the umbrella in your right hand and shout 'Cab!'"

My best wishes go to you, Madam President, to all my colleagues, and to the CD itself.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Sir Michael Weston for his statement and once again I wish him success and happiness. I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine, Ambassador Maimeskul.

Mr. MAIMESKUL (Ukraine) (translated from French): Madam President, it is with great pleasure that I wish to congratulate you on taking up the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, especially since you represent a neighbour, a friendly country, which at the same time as Ukraine became a full member of the Conference on Disarmament, the prestigious international forum. Allow me also to express our gratitude to your predecessors, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation and Mrs. Diallo, Ambassador of Senegal, the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Bensmail, for their untiring efforts to improve the substance and the form of work of the CD, the aim being to maintain the CD's unique position in the field of arms control and disarmament. I would also like to wish Ambassador Sir Michael Weston every success and welcome the new ambassadors from New Zealand and Chile.

Despite the fact that for years now its agenda has remained unchanged, the Conference on Disarmament has always been alive to the challenges of the time, the barometer for measuring the climate of international security. The events which drove the CD to complete the negotiations on the Convention to prohibit chemical weapons and to produce the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty are well known. At the moment the Conference is seeking an adequate response to the challenge facing the international community as a result of the proliferation of anti-personnel landmines in several countries in the world. We are satisfied at the nomination of the CD's Special Coordinator on the mines problem, and we assure Ambassador Campbell of our full and constructive cooperation. Our delegation continues to believe that within the Conference there is an absolute need for an ad hoc committee on the problem of anti-personnel mines, since the members of the CD which are not involved in the Ottawa Process own almost half of global stocks of anti-personnel mines. It may well be that we will need to go through some intermediate phases in order to complete the total ban on anti-personnel mines.

(Mr. Maimeskul, Ukraine)

Between the second and third parts of the 1997 CD session, the summit of NATO member countries was held in Madrid. Its outcome is certainly historic for the formation of the pan-European security system, and we feel it will have an important influence in the coming years on the process of global disarmament. It is absolutely necessary for this influence to be exclusively positive. As far as Ukraine is concerned, the importance of the Madrid summit lies first of all in the signing on 9 July of the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between Ukraine and NATO, a highly important international document. The document governs the relations of partnership that now exist between Ukraine and NATO, and establishes directions for the development of future cooperation between the parties concerned.

It must be emphasized that cooperation between Ukraine and NATO is not directed against any third party. This cooperation is based on recognition of the fact that security for all European countries is indivisible, that no country should pursue its own security at the expense of the security of another country and that no country can regard any part of the region as its sphere of influence. The two parties intend to build these mutual relations on the basis of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of other countries, the inviolability of frontiers and the development of good-neighbourly relations. Special emphasis is placed in the Charter on confirmation of the security assurances provided by the five nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Charter reiterates the commitments undertaken by the United States and the United Kingdom, and by Russia and France, which took the historic decision in Budapest in 1994 to provide Ukraine with security assurances as a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the NPT. Ukraine's decision to renounce the possession of nuclear weapons and to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State greatly contributed to the strengthening of security and stability in Europe and earned my country special stature in the world community. As the Charter emphasizes, NATO welcomes Ukraine's decision to support the indefinite extension of the NPT and to lend its assistance to the withdrawal and dismantling of nuclear weapons based on its territory.

In this context, I recall the debate which took place at the end of the second phase of our session concerning the ad hoc committee on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States offered by the nuclear States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The resumption of the work of that ad hoc committee, the drawing up of the multilateral international treaty in this field, is in our view acceptable to almost all the members of the CD. It would also be in keeping with the challenge of the times and could offer us a way out of the deadlock for the CD.

In conclusion, I would like to refer once again to the Charter, whereby Ukraine and NATO will continue to implement fully all agreements on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and confidence-building measures to which they have subscribed. As you can see, Ukraine has taken another practical step testifying to my country's fidelity to the cause of the strengthening of peace, security and disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Maimeskul for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I have no further speakers on my list for today. Do any other delegations wish to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the representative of Chile, Ambassador Illanes.

Mr. ILLANES (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Very briefly, Madam President, I would like to thank you for your kind words of welcome for this delegate, on joining the work of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to say that my country and myself attach the greatest importance to this work, and that is why I am joining this meeting at this time with the best will to cooperate with you, with the secretariat, with the delegates of the other member countries of the Conference, in the major task on which this Conference has been engaged for many years, and which has its ups and downs. Wisdom probably consists in a long-term view to enable us to glimpse how we can seek consensus and secure progress. I know I shall learn much from daily contact and work with the diplomatic colleagues from other countries, whose wisdom was exemplified by the words we have just heard from Sir Michael Weston, who with a great deal of humour, but a great deal of philosophy and wisdom, has shown us the path of progress. For the moment I reiterate my gratitude to the President and assure her that she will enjoy my full cooperation in her future work.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh): I should like to pay tribute to Sir Michael Weston on the eve of his departure from the Conference. I have been in Geneva myself for only a few months, but within this short span of time I have been exposed to the prodigious qualities of the Ambassador: literary, as has been made amply evident today, sartorial, and despite his protestations, artistic. His humour was like a breath of fresh air in our sometimes rather staid work. It is with much sadness that I learn that after three and a half decades of active diplomacy he is finally laying down his bowler hat and umbrella. But we hope that he raises the umbrella to summon a cab that will take him to a very well-earned retirement. He compared the CD to a little girl of varied disposition. It reminds me of a poem by Mary Shelley:

"As I walked down
The Cranborough Lane,
Cranborough Lane was dirty,
There I met a pretty maid
Who dropp'd to me a curts'y;
I gave her cakes,
I gave her wine,
I gave her sugar candy;
But oh! the little naughty girl,
She asked me for some brandy!"

To some of our colleagues, the demands, such as the campaign for nuclear disarmament, placed on the CD are perhaps like the under-age little girl asking for strong liquor. Such perceptions notwithstanding, the CD has

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several remarkable achievements to its credit and I have no doubt that this will continue even if it be at times at such an unacceptably slow pace. I also welcome the new envoys of Chile and New Zealand and look forward to working together with them.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): I would like at the outset on behalf of my delegation to welcome the new ambassadors to the CD and wish His Excellency the Ambassador of the United Kingdom every happiness in his future life.

I would first like to refer to rule 11 of the rules of procedure, which reads: "Apart from exercising the normal functions of a presiding officer and in addition to the powers conferred upon him elsewhere by these rules, the President shall, in full consultation with the Conference and under its authority, represent it" - and I underline that: represent it - "in its relations with States, with the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations and with other international organizations."

My delegation has deemed it necessary to refer to this rule in the light of the report that we have received concerning the President's meeting with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 3 July. What the President said to the Secretary-General concerning anti-personnel landmines in the second paragraph of her report, whether it stems from her belief that the CD is the appropriate forum to deal with this subject or from her belief that a ban on transfers will lead to the desired objective, I would like to say that the President's report on these two points does not reflect the viewpoint of the Conference on Disarmament as a whole. My delegation would therefore like to place on record the fact that it disagrees with the President's understanding of these two points.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): For my delegation today is a day of mixed feelings. On the one hand, we regret the departure of our friend Sir Michael Weston, though despite his five and a half years in the Conference on Disarmament, he continues to confuse nuclear weapons with umbrellas. On the other hand, this is the first time it falls to me to welcome Ambassador Javier Illanes. I have had occasion to bid him farewell twice: the first time in Brasilia when we were ambassadors there; the second in the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States, almost a decade ago, and I recall on that occasion I said that, in our lengthy friendship, our parting was just the first step towards meeting again. We have now met again, and this Conference has gained from the arrival of Ambassador Illanes, a distinguished jurist, a great gentleman, who will make a great contribution to our work. Of course that does not console us for the departure of Sir Michael Weston, who has a greater sense of humour than Ambassador Illanes. Welcome also to the Ambassador of New Zealand, Ambassador Pearson. Our delegations work together here and in New York on these subjects and we share views, ideals and objectives. Finally, just to place on record the view of the delegation of Mexico concerning the President's report on her meeting with the United Nations Secretary-General, namely that on that occasion the President expressed solely and exclusively the views of her delegation, not the views of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement. Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor at this stage? There are not.

As I announced at the beginning of this plenary meeting, I would like to remind you that in 15 minutes' time we will be holding open-ended informal consultations.

Before I adjourn this plenary meeting, I would like to inform you that the Special Coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, Ambassador Mounir Zahran of Egypt, will be holding his first meeting this afternoon at 3 p.m. in this room.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday, 31 July at 11 a.m., since other consultations will be held between 9 and 11 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.